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BY

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Oxford, N. C.

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Natural Selection and the Race Problem.

By Benj. K. Hays, M. D., Oxford, N. C.

So much has been written on the subject of late, so near does it come to the heart and home of each one of us, and so long have the older men present been struggling with the problem, that I doubt not that in its practical bearing many of you are more familiar with it than I am.

In a scientific discussion prejudice can have no place.

It is true that racial prejudice is a factor—perhaps the chief factor—to be considered in the settlement of the problem, but if we desire to reach the truth we must forget for a time that we are men of one color, discussing men of another color.

It is not my purpose to approach this question from the standpoint of a moralist, nor to advise men as to their duty.

For the cruel treatment, which in rare instances, negroes have received from the hands of white men, I have no defence, nor am I ignorant of the fact that cruel treatment of a brother, though his skin be black, brutalizes the man who inflicts it.

The black man has formed no trust on the crime and ignorance of the South.

I shall not undertake to say what relationship between the two races ought or ought not to exist. With the doctrinaire who points the way to ideal conditions I have little patience. The moral attitude of the two races, relative to each other, will never be superior to that of the races individually.

When New York society and Pennsylvania politics have become pure; when the chicken roost and the sheep pasture have ceased to be a temptation; and when the moral teachings of Jesus of Nazareth have become the rule and guide of men's daily lives, then, and not till then may we hope for absolute justice between white men and black men.

Personally, I am an advocate of industrial education, and endorse every word that I have heard fall from the lips of the Educational Governor of North Carolina, and every line that I have seen from the pen of the great Colored Apostle of industrial education.

The object of this paper is to examine the conditions as they are; to account for them by natural causes; to inquire if those causes are still operative; and if possible to note whither they are tending.

At the time the negro received his freedom in the South there was a book in circulation in Europe which was being read and pondered upon by thinking men. It was destined to become the most notable production of the nineteenth century; it revolutionized human thought. and in the light of its teachings all institutions, both human and divine, had to be studied anew.

I refer, of course, to Darwin's Origin of Species.

The universal law of evolution had been announced by Herbert Spencer in the early fifties, but it was not until 1859, with the appearance of Darwin's book, that the theory of Natural Selection was born.

The greatest intellectual contest that the world has known was called forth by this book. The minor details of some of its teachings have been modified, but scientific men of to-day who differ with Darwin, differ chiefly in this, that they carry the theory a step further than its author. To use the language of LeConte, they out-Darwin Darwin.

And yet, so far as I have been able to learn, no man has made a clear application of the law of evolution to the two races in this country. Heredity plays an important part in the law of evolution, and this phase of the subject has been dealt with by the masterly hand of Dr. Paul Barringer, but the "Struggle for Existence" between the two races and "The Survival of the Fittest" are themes that have been strangely neglected.

Before undertaking to make this application, let us clearly understand what is meant by evolution, and just what part, in this great law, "Natural Selection" is supposed to play. For just as sure as the planets are held in their orbits by the law of gravitation, just so sure will the future inhabitants of this soil be but the products of evolution; and this with entire disregard to any man's opinion of what they should be, or with any set of men's determination as to what they shall be.

Evolution has been happily defined by John Fiske as "God's way of doing things." "It is simply history, a history of steps, a general name for the history of the steps by which the world has come to what it is."

(Drummond). "It is continuous progressive change, according to certain laws, and by means of resinent forces." (LeConte).

It does not undertake to account for the origin of life upon the globe, but, given the creation of a living being, with powers of reproduction, and we will find a continuous progressive change in accordance with definite laws.

This is Evolution.

No species can go on reproducing itself without finding some natural check upon its growth; otherwise that species would soon over-run the entire globe. In the case of animal life it must contend with heat, cold, drought, moisture, disease, famine and the enemies to which it falls a prey.

The animal which is best able to meet the conditions—best adapted to its environment, which, because of strength, color or habits, can procure its food or escape its enemies is the one which lives. This is "The Survival of the Fittest."

The survivor transmits its superior traits to its offspring, and the slight variability, added to by countless generations, finally evolves a new species. This is "Natural Selection."

If we accept the theory, (and I without reservation do accept it) that all animal life descended from a few primitive forms, we are able to trace, step by step, every stage in the development of the higher forms of life. For, as a tree in its upward growth, throws off limbs that never rise above their place of origin, so, animal life at every stage has thrown off developed species, and

these species have moved down the ages practically unchanged, while the highest branches have continued steadily onward in their growth. It is not believed, nor has it ever been taught, that any higher form was evolved from the offshoot of a lower form.

Evolutionists no more believe that man descended from a monkey than that the highest twig of an oak grows from the tip of its lowest limb.

Notwithstanding the continued progress in the higher species, every individual must reproduce, in his own history, the entire history of the race. The ontogeny is a repetition of the phylogeny.

Every man is once a single cell, and so much, in this stage of his development does he resemble certain protozoa that only the most expert microscopist can distinguish between the two. Later in embryonic development, man passes through the gastrula stage, and here, in shape and structure, he resembles the chalk sponge.

And so, through the various stages of embryonic life, we find man resembling various animals. At a certain stage it is impossible to distinguish the human embryo from that of a chick; later when it appears distinctively mammal it is still indistinguishable from a pig. No one can watch the antics of a chimpanzee without being impressed with its similarity in action and mentality to a four or five year old boy. At birth, and for some years after, Shakespear had less intelligence than a monkey, while

St. Paul knew less difference between right and wrong than a pointer dog.

If dogs and monkeys were trained through countless generations there is no telling to what extent their intelligence might be developed, but it is certain that a dog would never become a monkey, nor a monkey a man. Moreover, if left to themselves, it is doubtful if either dogs or monkeys would ever attain to a higher stage than that which they now occupy.

I have given this hurried and imperfect sketch of development because I believe that the same law is operative when applied to the various races of men.

There is a certain point at which races and nations have seemed grown. They pass into a lethargy or decadent period, and from this they never advance, while the trunk of development passes on in certain vigorous individuals, who found a new nation or become the progenitors of a new race of men.

The river-drift man once inhabited Europe, chipped his stones and passed away. The Iberian came, and his weapon was of polished stone, but when the Aryan appeared the Iberian melted before him.

The Aryans were the progenitors of the Anglo-Saxons, and wherever this race has gained a foothold the land is in its possession to-day.

In his early struggle for existence man contended with the heat of a tropical summer, and with the cold of an arctic winter, with famine and pestilence, with the wild beasts of the field, with the many diseases to which he was subject, with the difficulty

of supporting his young, and, most of all to be dreaded, with his fellow-man.

With the many barriers to development which nature had placed in the way the Anglo-Saxons contended successfully. Of their struggles with other races I will quote from Major Robert Bingham:

"They touched the Celt, and in a hundred years there were no Celts except in the mountains of Wales and in the mountains of Scotland. The Norman touched them, and the Norman was absorbed and his identity disappeared. They came in contact with the Red man in America; and, as the Celt vanished away at the touch of the barbarian Angles and Saxons, so the Red man vanished away at the touch of their descendants, the civilized Anglo-Americans. This same man touched the Frenchman from the mouth of the St. Lawrene to the mouth of the Mississippi, and the Frenchman's power in that vast region is with last year's snow, and what was once French America is now the heart of Anglo-American civilization and power. The yellow man touched the Anglo-American and has been excluded more by the unwritten law of race hostility and race antagonism than by any formal acts of Congress. And the Anglo-American has just touched the Spaniard and the Spaniard has vanished from this hemisphere."

History is one continuous record of the struggle between races, nations and political parties; between religions, languages, and schools of philosophy; between artisans and tradesmen; and with sorrow do I record

the fact that the struggle is no where more keenly felt than among the members of our own profession.

It is the most distressing feature of our civilization, that while Christianity has enabled us to become a great nation, and has made of men good citizens, good neighbors, kind fathers and faithful friends, yet, in the treatment of competitors men seem to feel no moral restraint. The millionaire who gives largely to his church, endows a college, builds an asylum, and does not see a sparrow fall to the ground without compassion, scruples not to wreck a thousand homes by a financial transaction.

Such is the race with which the black man on American soil has to contend.

And the black man—what of him?

As he was known to the ancient Egyptians, to the Greek and to the Roman, even so is he found in his African home to-day. At the dawn of history he was fully developed, and during the past three thousand years he has not made one step of progress. Independently, he has shown no power to advance. The superiority of the American negro to his African brother, who is a savage and a cannibal, is due to slavery, and could have been acquired in no other way. Men who ascribe debased characteristics of the negro to slavery show a short-sightedness that is pitiable. The present attainment of the American negro has been solely the result of his close personal contact with the white man.

Nor should it be forgotten that most of the leaders of the negro race are men with

Anglo-Saxon blood in their veins who partake more of their Caucasian than of their Ethiopian lineage. Some of these are splendid men, who are making heroic efforts to elevate the negro race. Others of mixed blood are vicious and turbulent. These are the men who create trouble.

Left to itself, a negro population lapses into barbarism. The Republic of Hayti is an example of this. A recent writer in the World's Work has thus described it: "A government without a practical school system, a government whose expenditures are seldom made for improvements, a government without adequate asylums or hospitals, a government of petty thieving, continual insurrection, promiscuous poisoning, and counterfeit finance—this is the Negro Republic of Hayti, the land where the black rules."

In the Popular Science Monthly,* a writer on ethnology says: "Only in single exceptional cases have leading spirits ever risen from out these lower casts; and where the separatist movement has been confined to these colored primitive races, it has led not only to cutting loose from the mother country, but also to a more or less complete renunciation of European civilization."

In this country, just so far as personal contact with the whites has been withdrawn, to that extent has the negro retrograded. It is a serious question if he has not relapsed more during the past forty years by losing the intimate association of the white man

* August, 1889, "Ran Questions in Philippine Islands."

than he has gained by the $200,000,000 that have been spent for his education.

The negro has been domesticated, but the question is, will he ever become an integral part of Anglo-American civilization.

Having noted the contrast between the two races, let us ask, why do men of Anglo-Saxon blood, who have never yielded a foot of soil that they once possessed; who have never deigned to mix with a conquered people, but have established independent civilizations in the home of the Indian, in India, in Australia; who have robbed the Boers of their possessions; who have defied arctic snows and tropic suns, and have penetrated to the remotest islands of the seas in search of new lands to conquer—why does such a race cherish in its bosom one of the humblest races of earth? To my mind the answer is clear—there has been no Struggle for Existence.

The black man has never been a competitor, but has always been subservient to the white race. And just so long as he remains subservient his position is secure, and just so soon as he becomes a competitor his fate is sealed.

It is not necessary that he should work for a white master, or remain a menial. In a country whose natural resources are undeveloped, as is the case with the South, a man may serve a municipality or a State. In North Carolina, for example, there is need of men to develop her farms and to work in her factories; there is need of day laborers, carpenters and masons, dressmakers and laundry women, and so long as

the negro renders this service he is protected by the white man as a gardener protects his hot-house plants.

But even here the Struggle for Existence is felt, for wherever you find a white man whose work brings him into competition with a negro, there you find a man who cherishes a bitter hatred of the entire negro race; and were it not for the protecting arm of the non-competing white man these rivals of the negro would turn upon him in a single night. It is this class of men, who, when their passions are so aroused that they can be no longer restrained, compose lynching parties and create race riots.

Only once in our history did the negro become the competitor of the white race as a whole, and that was when he aspired to political honors. The political position of the negro to-day is but a forecast of what his racial position will be when he undertakes to realize his dream of commercial, intellectual and social equality.

The recent agitation of the race problem, making all due allowance for the political capital created out of race prejudice, has in my judgment been due to this, that the negro has, in a degree, ceased to be the useful artisan of which the South stands solely in need, and has divided into two classes—those who aspire to social equality with the whites, and those who have retrograded, and because of crime and vagrancy, have become a menace to civilization.

Prof. DuBois, one of the most scholarly negroes in this country, in a contribution to

the Atlantic Monthly,* tells of recent attainments of many negro graduates. He says that the attainment of the few is the hope of the many, and that this flame of hope can by no possible human agency be extinguished.

And yet, if every American negro could, by some miraculous power, be endowed with Prof. DuBois' scholarship, or if every tenth negro could have this priceless gift, the two races could no longer occupy the same soil. Every page of human history points to the fact that one or the other would have to go, nor can we doubt that the exodus would take place amid scenes of uproar and carnage.

It is not claimed that the white man would have a greater right to the soil than the negro, nor that there would be any possible justification for the course that he would pursue. I have seen no vindication of the course pursued with the Indian; yet, I am convinced that if the negro were in a position to make a contest for supremacy that the tragedy enacted with the Indian would be repeated.

And if this laudable advancement on the part of the best of the negro race portends his destruction, how much greater his danger from that vicious element which renders the home and highway unsafe for unprotected women.

In the face of the fact that swift and violent death follows each violation of a white woman, the crime of rape is on the increase.

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*September, 1902.

Unknown a generation ago, its alarming frequency at the present time can be accounted for only by the false hopes of social equality on the part of the lowest negroes. They are unwilling to pay the price of industrial advancement, incapable of mental or moral elevation; endowed by nature with a lust closely akin to that of the brute creation; without love of home or country, they can, by the single act of ravishing a white woman, gratify every passion of their depraved natures.

This class of negroes is, relatively speaking, very small, yet it is on the increase. Unless checked there will surely come a time when the entire negro population will be made to suffer for the crimes of the few.

If, by the majority of votes of the Southern white men the negro might be transported to, say the Philippine Islands, undoubtedly he would be permitted to remain with us. Personally, we like him, and the South needs his labor.

Charles Sumner was approached by a negro asking alms. He replied: "I am interested in you as a race, not as an individual."

In the South men are everywhere interested in negroes as individuals, while they care little for the race. There are few of you here to-day who have not given largely to negroes, nor do you count it a disagreeable task to ride through the country on the seat with your negro driver.

The disinclination of the Northern white man to come in personal contact with negroes is the result of racial prejudice,

while the Southern man feels for his domestic an affection born of mutual dependence. But the old affection and the mutual dependence are on the wane, and no matter how much we may regret the fact, the races are drifting apart.

And this aspiration for social equality on the part of the better class of negroes, this increase of crime on the part of the worst, and this gradual loss of kindly relation between master and servant, point unmistakably to a relationship of the races in the future unlike that which has existed in the past.

Students of ethnology tell us that the process of civilization is fixed by immutable law. It can no more be hurried in its course than a glacier or the current of a river. It must pass through stages as definitely fixed as the seven ages of man.

The various forms of society, religions and governments that have existed in the world have not been the outcome of chance, nor have they been the special creation of any set of men. They have existed because they were the only forms that could exist at certain stages of development. Like stages of development have been characterized by like institutions. Institutions have reacted upon inhabitants, and through long periods of time have developed definite forms of civilization.

The life of a civilization, like that of an oak, depends for its strength upon the depth and breadth to which its roots are struck.

In Africa the undisturbed negro is in a savage state. Contact with the whites in

this country has given him a laudable desire for civilization. But, for this boon, other races have paid a price at every step from which the negro cannot hope to escape.

The white man may divide the product of his civilization, but the civilization itself was moulded in the alembic of nature, and cannot be transferred by human hands.

This is a point which many well-meaning friends of the negro have been unable to grasp. They develop upon a hot-house plant a foliage that invites wind and storm, not realizing that their misdirected energies tend to destroy the object of their solicitude. A grafted pseudo-civilization cannot stand the shocks of time.

Nearly a thousand years have passed since Anglo-Saxons wrested Magna Charta from the hands of their king—years of slow development in sweat and blood. Of the twenty-six barons who signed that paper, only three could write their names. There are thousands of negroes in this country to-day who have had the advantages of modern education, but could you find among them twenty-six men who would be the peers of those grim old heroes who faced King John?

And now a word on the history of the South.

The institution of slavery which early found a foot-hold was a bar to development. In the first half of the nineteenth century each decade found the northern States growing in wealth and influence, while the slave-holding States were practically at a stand-still.

Then came the devastating cloud of war that cost the South a million of her most hopeful sons. In the two decades that followed she faced a question of existence, not of advancement.

At this time the great undeveloped West proved a veritable Utopia to emigrants, while Northern cities offered inducements to talented young men. The South was a slough of despond, and many of her sons left their homes to try other fields.

To-day the conditions have changed. There are no more unoccupied lands in the West, and the cities of the North no longer offer opportunities for easy money-making.

But there has been an awakening in the South. Her recent advancement along industrial lines has been such as to excite the admiration and wonder of the nation. Northern capital has turned in this direction, the price for labor has advanced, men of talent find remunerative employment, and no man who is willing to work need remain idle. This means that the resources of the South will be developed; great centers of wealth will gradually arise, every form of industry will be pursued; and there will be a rapid increase in population.

But, save in the cotton fields of the far South, the negro has failed to meet the conditions. While his misdirected energies have been spent clamoring for social and political equality, the monopoly which for nearly three centuries he held upon Southern labor has slipped from his hands. The time is not far distant when he will enter upon a

Struggle for Existence with men of Anglo-Saxon blood.

What will become of him?

All talk of transportation is idle. For white men to abandon any section of this country and leave it to negroes would be a reversion of the trend of history. A general uprising in deeds of slaughter would destroy our civilization, not that the whites would have aught to fear from the defenceless negro, but because men cannot commit murder and remain civilized.

In the face of these opinions, recognizing the cry of the negro for equal rights with the white man, I stand convinced that the two races cannot occupy the same soil on terms of equality.

To do so the laws of nature must be changed, and race prejudice buried; the law of development broken, and savages changed into civilized men at a bound; the laws of Natural Selection rendered inoperative, and the weak contend equally with the strong in the Struggle for Existence.

But these laws will not be changed, and even while we are talking they are silently solving the problem.

The more advanced a civilization becomes, the greater is the opportunity offered for immorality. If that civilization is to endure there must be a commensurate power of resistance on the part of the individual

Our civilization offers the negro alcohol, gambling hells and venereal diseases, but it does not give the power to resist temptation. Our civilization offers individual liberty, but liberty to the ignorant means

license and crime. Our civilization offers industrial advancement but a refusal to comply with the conditions means poverty and disease.

Formerly the negro was protected from every varying wind by a beneficent hand. The slave-holding class of whites felt a moral responsibility for him. This class is passing away.

The North regarded him as a down-trodden race, and took a peculiar interest in his welfare. This interest will not live through another generation. But when these friends of the negro are gone, and sectional strife in this country shall have been forgotten, racial prejudice will live then as now.

The negro must work out his own destiny as other races have done. This civilization, vicariously attained, is not yet his own.

Large numbers of negroes are moving North, where they will never become a factor. Others are being crowded from fields of industry by labor organizations, and the growing unwillingness on the part of the white labor to work with the black. Still others are unwilling to work and are parasites upon the towns and counties. The criminal class is on the increase and our prisons are crowded. The paupers are on the increase, and our alms houses are crowded. Insanity is on the increase and our asylums are crowded. Their places of abode are becoming more unsanitary, and disease is quietly yet relentlessly doing its work.

A few weeks ago a negro man called at

my office with his daughter. Her hopeless condition was apparent at a glance.

"How many children have you lost?" I inquired.

"Seven."

"What was their trouble?"

"They all died of consumption," was the reply.

Many such instances could be related by every Southern physician, yet consumption was unknown among the negroes in the days of slavery.

"Tuberculosis," said Dr. Hunter McGuire, "will exterminate the negro race in this country."

The death-rate of the negro is already twice that of the whites as a whole, while in towns and cities it is nearly three times as great, and the proportion is constantly on the increase.

If it is answered in the face of these conditions that the negro population has doubled in forty years, it should be remembered that he has lived in an undeveloped country; that he received help from white men, both North and South; that the willing service which he rendered was everywhere in demand; and that in his sphere he was without competition.

Even then his increase was not commensurate with the whites, and was less than his own in slavery.

The negro of the future will labor in a developed country, not only unsupported, but in competion with white men. He must adjust himself to a civilization which he cannot comprehend, and face racial pre-

judice where formerly he found sympathy and aid.

That the great mass of negroes is quietly and contentedly at work is true. True many of them have acquired property, built churches, school houses, and other civilizing institutions. For this class I believe the immediate future is bright and hopeful. But for that class who hope through education to live, not only without work, but upon terms of social equality with the whites, for the vicious, tuburlent, criminal and pauper class there can be but one future.

The anomalous position of the negro is not the result of chance, but of natural law. He was sold here a slave as other slaves have been sold to other countries. In the South he aided the white man in his Struggle for Existence, and was protected. At the North he was of no aid, and his services were dispensed with.

His emancipation was inevitable. That the method employed was the result of a blunder need not now be discussed.

When freedom came it was inevitable that the strong, intelligent, law-abiding race should control the weak, ignorant, lawless race.

History records no instance in which these two races have become amalgamated, nor lived upon the same soil upon terms of equality; nor does it record an instance in which the African, by any course of training has become an integral part of an advanced civilization.

The weak has ever been dominated by

the strong, and where the strong cannot control it will destroy.

As long as a weaker race will render service, it will be protected by the stronger.

But whenever and wherever the weaker becomes a competitor of the stronger, the Struggle for Existence will be brief, and the relentless hand of Natural Selection will place the weaker in the list of those that are numbered with the past.

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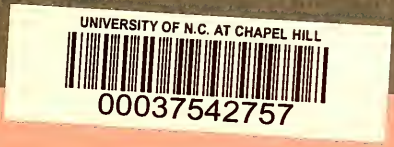

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